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Observance of the Sabbath.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA, February 7th 1864 —General Order No. 15.—I. The attention of the army has already been called to the obligation of a proper observance of the Sabbath, but the sense of its importance not only as a moral and religious duty, but as contributing to the personal health and well-being of the troops, induces the Commanding General to repeat the orders on that subject. He has learned with great pleasure that in many brigades convenient houses of worship have been erected, and earnestly desires that every facility consistent with the requirements of discipline shall be afforded the men to assemble themselves together for the purpose of devotion.

II. To this end he directs that none but duties strictly necessary shall be required to be performed on Sunday and that the labor, both of men and animals, which it is practicable to anticipate or postpone, or the immediate performance of which is not essential to the safety, health, or comfort of the army, shall be suspended on that day.

III. Commanding officers will require the usual inspections on Sunday to be held at such time as not to interfere with the attendance of the men on divine service, at the customary hour in the morning.

They will also give their attention to maintenance of order and quiet around the place of worship, and prohibit anything that may tend to disturb or interrupt religious exercises.

R. E. LEE, General.

A Knoxville dispatch of the 24th, published in the Northern papers says that "a reconnaissance in force, under command of General Stoneman, with the forces of Generals Hascall and Hazen, was made on Monday night towards Bull Gap, which discovered that the Confederate cavalry had retreated beyond the French Broad river. On Saturday, the 20th Longstreet began his retreat from Strawberry Plains towards Bull's Gap, first destroying the bridge. Gen. Schofield moved to the plains with the Federal forces, and assigned the command of the post and defences of Knoxville to Brigadier General Hascall."

Five large buildings, on the borders of Fresh Pond, Cambridge, Mass., were destroyed by fire on Wednesday last. The buildings contained nearly one hundred thousand tons of ice cut this season, a large portion of which will be lost. The fire was the work of an incendiary.

The owners of the steamship Bohemian have contracted with the New York Coast Wrecking Company to raise and bring the wreck into harbor without discharging her.

The Maryland State Convention at Baltimore instructed the delegates to the National Convention to vote for Mr. Lincoln as their first and only choice.

Artemus Ward and Dr. Hingston, his agent, were captured by a band of Indians while on an excursion to Salt Lake, but were released through the efforts of Governor Reed and Brigham Young.

The following letter of U. S. Attorney General Bates is published in the Northern papers.

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE,
WASHINGTON, Sept. 16, 1863.

Hon. J. G. Knapp, Judge, &c., Messilla, N. M.:

SIR: Your letter of the 4th August, complaining of military arrests, was slow in reaching me, and then such was the urgent and continued occupation of the President in the great affairs of the government, that I have not been able till now to fix his attention upon the particular outrage upon you, as your letter makes me believe it to be.

There seems to be a general and growing disposition of the military, wherever stationed, to engross all power, and to treat the civil government with contumacy, as if the object were to bring it into contempt.

I have delivered my opinion very plainly to the President, and I have reason to hope that he, in the main, concurs with me in believing that those arbitrary proceedings ought to be suppressed.

He has issued an order to have Captain Bennett called to account for his arbitrary conduct in your case.

I remain, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant.

EDWARD BATES.

The Alexandria case was taken up in the British Exchequer Chambers on the 6th February, and Sir Hugh Cairns, who appeared for the defendants, took exception at once to the jurisdiction of the court to entertain the appeal. The judges deferred their decision until the 8th, when, by a majority of one, in a court of seven judges, they decided to dismiss the appeal on the ground of want of jurisdiction.—The case will therefore be carried up to the House of Lords.

The Washington correspondent of the New York Times says: "The city is filled with rumors touching alleged movements not only of armies in the West, but also of the Army of the Potomac. The return of Gen. Meade to the army on Sunday was followed by reports that tents were to be struck the following morning, and a serious effort would be made to dislodge Lee from his position on the south bank of the Rapidan. There is reason to believe, also, that Gen. Grant is in motion from Chattanooga."

The London Post understands that the English Government has proposed an armistice to the belligerents on the basis of the evacuation of Schleswig, with the exception of the island of Alsen, by the Danes. This suggestion has met with the support of France, Russia and Sweden, and is put forward as preliminary to a conference which it is hoped will finally dispose of the long vexed question of the Dutchies.

Advices from China state that the American house of Russell & Co. are in difficulty with the British authorities of Hong Kong for having supplied the Japanese with munitions of war. One of their ships was chased by a British steamer, and has been confiscated, with the whole of her cargo—muskets and gunpowder.

A dispatch from Cumberland Gap to the Northern papers says:—On the 22d instant a battalion of the Eleventh Tennessee Cavalry, stationed on the Virginia road, five miles east, were surprised at daylight, and surrounded by a force of Confederate cavalry and two companies of infantry. The Ninety-first Indiana and Second North Carolina were with the command of Col. Davis. A company of the 91st, cut and fought their way through with a loss of three killed. Two officers and about sixty of Col. Davis's men succeeded in making their escape, but the rest of the command were probably captured. Col. Davis is said to be severely wounded. At the same time the Confederates attacked the Federal outposts at Powell's Bridge on the Tazewell road, consisting of fifty men, supported by a block-house. The Confederates were repulsed three times, when Capt. Pickering with his men were withdrawn to prevent their being cut off from the Gap.

The Confederate Congress, after passing the Tax, Currency, and Military bills, adjourned on the 18th instant, until the first Monday in May next.

The Ohio Republicans do not take very kindly to Mr. Chase's presidential circular; at least their chief organ, the Cincinnati Gazette, professes to be very much disgusted with the whole affair.

Nineteen Confederate soldiers have been hung at Kinston, N. C., "for deserting to the enemy and taking up arms on the enemy's side."

The blockade runners India, City of Petersburg and A. D. Vance, with cotton from Wilmington, have arrived at Halifax.

In the English Parliament recently, Earl Derby attacked the Government policy in regard to the Alabama and Laird's rams, and insinuated that the latter were seized under American menaces. He moved for the production of the papers pending legal inquiries.

The Richmond correspondent of the London Times asserts that where one slave is now fighting for Lincoln, ten will be found fighting for the South.

The Washington Star says that out of thirty thousand veterans of the Army of the Potomac, whose terms of service expire within the next nine months, at least twenty-five thousand have already re-enlisted.

In Washington on Saturday morning a cooking range in the kitchen of the house of Mrs. Roche, on Twelfth street, exploded, injuring three of her children, one of them very badly about the face and neck. The explosion was probably caused by the boiler being allowed to get out of water.

The Albany Argus says: "The evidences multiply on all sides that we are to have a fresh proclamation from the President after the 10th of March, for a new draft in addition to that issued on the 1st of February."